LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-33 (Canceled).

34(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element comprising a curved backing made of steel extending lengthwise in a circumferential direction and laterally between opposite side edges of said backing, said backing being lined with a bearing material and a soft material, wherein [[the]] said bearing material is capable of sustaining a bearing load and [[the]] said soft material has anti-seizure properties, said bearing material including at least two individual strands of wire bonded to said backing and bordering said opposite side edges, respectively, of said backing, said at least two strands of wire lying flush against and in contact with said backing along their entire lengths such that there is no radial gap between said backing and said at least two strands of wire ~~being bonded to the backing and disposed at least at edges of the backing in the form of wires extending in a circumferential direction~~, and where the soft material is located at least in a space between at least two strands of said wires and wherein said at least two strands of wire present a containment barrier to inhibit lateral displacement of said soft material under compression load in use beyond said opposite edges of said backing.

35(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34 wherein the soft material covers the wires in order to form a sliding surface by itself.

36(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 35, wherein the soft material extends above the wires by a thickness of <30μm.

37(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 36, wherein the thickness of the soft material extending above the wires is <5μm.

38(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein a sliding surface of the bearing element is formed by the wires and the soft material.

39(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein t least one intermediate wire is bonded to the backing between two edge wires generally running in a circumferential direction.

40(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim 39, wherein the intermediate wire generally runs in the circumferential direction and in addition oscillates in the [[axial]] lateral direction of the sliding bearing element.

41(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 40, wherein the oscillation of the intermediate wire is regular.

42(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 41, wherein the oscillating intermediate wire has the shape of a wave.

43(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim [[29]] 34, wherein the edge wires and/or the intermediate wire have a circular cross-section.

44(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim [[43]] 34, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have the same diameter.

45(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim [[43]] 34, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 100 and 500μm.

46(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim [[43]] 34, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 200 and 400μm.

47(Currently Amended). Sliding bearing element according to claim [[43]] 34, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 250 and 350μm.

48(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the bearing alloy is a copper alloy.

49(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 48, wherein the copper alloy is a copper-tin alloy in which the tin content of the copper alloy is less that 12% by weight and more than 4% by weight.

50(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 49, wherein the copper alloy comprises a copper-tin-phosphorus alloy in which the phosphorus content of the copper ally is less than 1.0% by weight and greater than 0.01% by weight.

51(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the backing is coated with either copper or nickel.

52(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the soft material is either a metal or a metal alloy.

53(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 52, wherein the soft material is tin-based.

54(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 52, wherein the soft material is bismuth-based.

55(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the soft material is a polymer based composition.

56(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55 wherein the polymer based composition is based on polyphenylene sulphide, polyphenylene sulphone, polyetherether ketone, polyamide imide or polyaromatic polyester.

57(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55, wherein the polymer based composition incorporates an organic solid lubricant.

58(Previously Presented). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55, wherein the polymer based composition incorporates an inorganic solid lubricant.

59(Withdrawn). Method for producing a sliding bearing element, comprising:

- providing a backing strip,

- bonding at least one wire at each of two edges of the backing strip such that the wires run in a generally circumferential direction of the backing strip and form spaces between the wires; and

- filling the spaces between the wires with a relatively soft material.

60(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 59, wherein the wires are bonded to the backing by sintering.

61(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 60, wherein the sintering process for bonding the wires include the following steps:

- continuously feeding the backing strip through an induction coil in which the strip is heated in a non oxidizing atmosphere to a temperature at which sintering takes place; and

- dispensing the wires onto a surface of the strip within the induction coil such that the wires contact the strip surface as the strip reaches sintering temperature.

62(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 61, including:

- dispensing at least one intermediate wire from at least one associated dispenser reciprocating at right angles to the strip.

63(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filing of the spaces between the wires carried out by casting or by rolling at elevated temperature.

64(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer based composition in tape form by extrusion and rolling the tape at a temperature corresponding to its softening point in the spaces.

65(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer composition in paste form by means of an organic solvent and rolling the paste into the spaces and subsequently heat treating to remove the solvent and consolidate the polymer composition.

66(Withdrawn). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer composition as a powder or a blend of powders,

- spreading the powder or powder blend onto the strip in such a way as to fill the spaces between the wires, and

- consolidating the powder or powder blend by heat treating or heating and rolling.